

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, July 13, 2012

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Attachments to this field memo:

ELDS Input Feedback Invitation
Evaluations Requirements Memo 7-2-12
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Talkingaboutaccountability_v2

Action Item Calendar

Today (July 13): [Physical-restraint](#) reports due
Sunday (July 15): Schools and districts submit [final personnel assignments](#)
Sunday (July 15): Deadline for final reporting of [evaluation ratings](#)
Sunday (July 15): Deadline for submitting [school-construction forms](#)
Wednesday (July 18): Student [enrollment, attendance, discipline](#) files due
July 27: Deadline for reporting [final evaluation ratings](#)
July 30: Submission, [Absence, ADA, ADM, Suspension, Truancy](#) reports due

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. Students with disabilities eligible to earn diplomas, credentials

As the media continue to report on issues concerning the Rhode Island Diploma System and students with disabilities, I want to emphasize to you some of the points I raised in last week's Field Memo.

Students with special needs are in fact eligible to earn a traditional high-school diploma. We designed the Diploma System to help Rhode Island students, including those with special educational needs, become diploma-ready.

The 1 percent of Rhode Island students who participate in the Rhode Island Alternate Assessment, however, will not be eligible to earn a traditional high-school diploma. This fact should be an important part of all IEP meetings at which parents and educators discuss and determine whether a student should participate in the Alternate Assessment. Parents need to participate in this decision-making process, and you must inform parents that the IEP team will annually review whether their child should participate in the Alternate Assessment. Parents should also know that students who participate in the Alternate Assessment have the opportunity stay in school until they are 21 years old and to earn newly developed credentials designed to help them transition successfully into adulthood. These new credentials:

- were co-developed by RIDE along with public agencies serving adults with disabilities, labor and training, parents and parent organizations, special education administrators, and teachers of students who participate in the Alternate Assessment;
- are aligned with transition curricula currently in use throughout Rhode Island schools;
- identify the skills our youth will need in transition to the adult-service system and provide parents with important information for IEP and transition planning; and
- are connected to transcripts that will help families, students, and those serving them know what knowledge and skills these students have attained.

This fall, three districts will be piloting the credential options for students taking the Alternate Assessment; however, you may want to begin discussing these credentials immediately with your special education director and building administrators. It will be important to get information into the hands of teachers and administrators as they meet with parents. For more information on this matter, please see:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/OMP/Secondary/sec_regs.aspx#Secondary_Regulation_Guidance.

For children with disabilities who are not participating in the Alternate Assessment and who therefore are eligible to work toward a diploma, there are many accommodations and supports available to ensure they attain their goal. You can find more information here:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/OMP/default.aspx#Secondary>.

Finally, the graduation ceremony is an important moment in the lives of all students and families. All students who have earned a diploma or another credential should be able to participate in graduation ceremonies and to celebrate their accomplishments with their peers, family members, and teachers.

2. RIDE provides requirements, timeline on implementation of educator evaluations

As I noted to you in last week's Field Memo, Deputy Commissioner David V. Abbott has developed a memorandum and a timeline that provide important information regarding implementation of educator evaluations over the next three school years. These documents specify the requirements for all educator-evaluation systems in Rhode Island, which is particularly important information for districts that have opted to implement an approved evaluation model other than the Rhode Island Model for Educator Evaluations. For your

information, I am again attaching the memorandum and timeline on Educator Evaluation System Standards to this Field Memo, for your review before the start of the coming school year.

3. RIDE releases 2012 School Classifications

Today we released the 2012 School Classifications, the first set of classifications under our new Accountability System, which the U.S. Department of Education approved in May. Our new Accountability System is designed to recognize outstanding performance and to provide support to low-achieving schools.

The new accountability system enables us to:

- focus on achievement gaps;
- diagnose school performance by identifying specific shortcomings and achievements at each school;
- provide each school with the specific support or intervention needed to improve student achievement and to close achievement gaps; and
- provide these schools with the ability to select interventions that respond to their context and their needs.

Our 2012 School Classifications list places each school into one of six classifications: Commended, Leading, Typical, Warning, Focus, or Priority. We identified 26 schools (9 percent of classified schools) as Commended Schools, the highest-achieving schools in the state. We also identified 11 schools as Focus Schools (4 percent of classified schools) and 18 schools as Priority Schools (6 percent of classified schools). Focus and Priority Schools are the lowest-achieving schools in the state and are subject to state intervention.

Here is a link to our news release on the 2012 Classifications:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/2012_Classifications_Release_-_7-13-12.pdf

Here is a link to the lists of classifications and to our School Report Cards:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/DataWorks/>

I am also attaching to this Field Memo the talking points that we have developed (Talking about accountability) to help you communicate with your stakeholders regarding the classifications of your schools.

4. Transformation Officer Jennifer Smith leaving RIDE

At the end of the month, Jennifer Smith, our Chief Transformation Officer, will be leaving RIDE to join the leadership team at the Flamboyant Foundation, in Washington, D.C., as the Senior Director of Program Growth. The Flamboyant Foundation is an international nonprofit that seeks to increase opportunities for high-quality education through parent engagement focused on academics and advocacy for student success. Jennifer has played a key role in several major

RIDE initiatives, including our identification of and support for the lowest-achieving schools and the expansion of our charter public schools. Most recently, Jennifer has served as the RIDE liaison to Central Falls during our temporary assumption of control of Central Falls finances. We will miss Jennifer's presence here at RIDE, and I'm sure you will join with me in wishing her success as she continues with her commitment to improving student achievement.

5. Rhode Island career-technical centers, schools finish in top ten at national competition

Congratulations to our Rhode Island career-technical schools and centers and to the Rhode Island students who finished in the top ten in the country in the SkillsUSA Championships last month! More than 5,900 students from around the country competed in 96 occupational and leadership skill competitions. The Cranston Area Career and Technical Center finished in the top ten in 7 competitions; both the Chariho Career and Technical Center and the Warwick Area Career and Technical Center finished in the top ten in 2 competitions, and both the Newport Area Career and Technical Center and William M. Davies Jr. Career-Technical High School finished in the top ten in 1 competition. Jazel Rubio, of Davies, was a National Bronze Medal Winner in the Health Occupations Professional Portfolio competition. All of the students who participated and their teachers are showing that Rhode Island can lead the way as we work together to transform career-technical educational opportunities in our state.

6. Rhode Island meets federal requirements on implementing Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

We are very pleased that the U.S. Department of Education has evaluated Rhode Island on key indicators and determined that we meet requirements on implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The Office of Outreach and Communications has issued this notice:

As required by law, the Department has issued annual determination letters (<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/data/report/idea/sppapr.html>) regarding states' implementation of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). Each state was evaluated on key indicators under Part B (ages 3 through 21) and Part C (infants through age 2) and placed into one of four categories: meets requirements, needs assistance, needs intervention, and needs substantial intervention. Most states fell into the top two categories; 29 states met requirements for Part B, and 36 states and Puerto Rico met requirements for Part C. No states were in needs substantial intervention.

Rhode Island is one of the states meeting requirements for implementing both IDEA Part B and IDEA Part C. Congratulations to all those in the education field who devote their energies and expertise toward meeting the needs of our students with disabilities!

From RIDE:

7. RIDE posts information on Formative Assessment professional development

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

RIDE has developed a new webpage dedicated to the Formative Assessment Online Professional Development, which will launch on the Instructional Management System in September. In addition to general information about the professional-development course, the webpage contains materials targeted specifically for principals whose teachers will begin this course this fall. Materials include a recorded webinar, a document explaining connections between this initiative and other bodies of work, a document outlining some of the decision points for implementation, and a sample Professional Growth Goal on formative assessment. These resources can be accessed at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/Formative.aspx>.

Laura Kacewicz, from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum, has been in contact with LEAs that indicated in the spring survey that they will begin the formative-assessment professional development this fall. If you have not been contacted and are planning to launch this fall, please contact Laura, at 222-8993 or laura.kacewicz@ride.ri.gov.

8. RIDE to revise all LEA Race to the Top allocations

Please see this message from our Finance Office:

As we approach Year 3 of our Race to the Top implementation, we will be revising all LEA allocations in AcceleGrants as necessary to align with the updated State Scope of Work and the revised budget that was approved by the U.S. Department of Education in April. Our Race to the Top revised budget allowed us to redistribute unspent funds and savings realized after the first year-and-a-half of the program. Savings were primarily due to less spent on personnel, lower costs for contracts than anticipated, and revisions to some program designs. These revisions affected LEA budgets as well as the state budget. Savings in contracts were passed along to LEAs. We will be sending out instructions to all LEA business managers on the shifts in LEA direct allocations and set-asides and on how to amend Race to the Top budgets for the remaining funding available. If you have any questions on the revised allocations, please contact Crystal Martin, at 222-8482 or at crystal.martin@ride.ri.gov.

9. WIDA announces release of amplified English Language Development Standards for English Learners

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

The World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium, which Rhode Island has been a member of since 2006, is pleased to announce the release of its 2012 Amplification of the English Language Development Standards. This document was developed with input from leaders in the field, educators in states that are members of the WIDA Consortium, and feedback received during a public-comment period. The

work was also informed by the latest developments in both English-language development and content standards for college and career readiness.

Additions and enhancements include strengthening links between WIDA standards and the Common Core State Standards with illustrations at individual grade levels, overlaying cognitive demand on linguistic model performance indicators, and clarifying the features of academic language.

It is important to note that this amplification does not change the five WIDA standards currently in use in all 32 consortium states. Rather, it is an enhancement, not a replacement, of the 2007 edition. The 2012 amplification can be found at www.wida.us/eld. Fair-use guidelines allow for individuals to download copies for their personal use. Information about purchasing published copies will be posted soon, at www.wida.us/store.

In support of this release, WIDA will be holding four two-day conferences around the country from August through November. At these events, participants will:

- discuss how to infuse language-development standards into their practice;
- explore connections with the Common Core State Standards;
- reflect on the sociocultural context of classrooms; and
- connect with colleagues and other experienced educators.

Please go to www.wida.us/2012debut for more information about these opportunities.

The use of the WIDA standards by *all* teachers who work with English Learners is required by R.I.G.L. 16-54-2. In addition to the support resources that will be available through the WIDA Consortium, RIDE is planning a series of trainings and technical-assistance resources to aid LEAs in the adoption and integration of the updated standards. Details about the state training opportunities and resources will be finalized by the start of the school year, and a comprehensive plan will be released at that time. LEAs, however, must begin to develop their own local plans to ensure that educators are aware of these standards, are trained in their use, and utilize them in planning instruction and assessment of English Learners. State resources may augment local plans but cannot constitute the entire plan for an LEA.

Please contact Bob Measel (robert.measel@ride.ri.gov), Pat Morris (patricia.morris@ride.ri.gov), or Emily Klein (emily.klein@ride.ri.gov) if you have any questions.

10. Decision posted on Harmony Hill and DCYF v Cumberland

Our Legal Office has posted this decision on the Harmony Hill School and the Department for Children, Youth, and Families v the Cumberland School Committee:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2012/0011-12_Harmony_Hill_School_and_DCYF_v_Cumberland_S._C.062912.pdf

11. Reminder: Aggregate final evaluation ratings due to RIDE by July 27

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

RIDE is collecting aggregate teacher and building-administrator final evaluating ratings for the 2011-12 school year from every LEA, regardless of which educator-evaluation system is being implemented. The aggregate ratings are being collected for federal reporting purposes.

A template (Excel) for reporting aggregate final evaluation ratings is posted on the RIDE website. LEAs can send their aggregate final evaluation ratings to Jacqueline McKinney, at jacqueline.mckinney@ride.ri.gov. Starting with the 2012-13 school year, final educator-evaluation ratings will be collected automatically through the Educator Performance and Support System.

To access the template for reporting aggregate final evaluation ratings, please visit the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/EdEvalAnnounce.aspx>

12. RIDE to offer training, resources for implementation of the Educator Performance and Support System

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

The Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS) is the statewide data system that RIDE has developed to capture all critical information associated with the evaluation process and to serve as the system of record for evaluation data. In order to meet the needs of new system users, RIDE will offer a combination of in-person training sessions, train-the-trainer resources (for LEAs), Q & A sessions, and online video-training modules. An overview of these resources, including links to registration for live training opportunities, is posted on the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/educatorquality/educatorevaluation/EPSS.aspx>

13. Registration open for Rhode Island Model Summer Academies

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

The Rhode Island Model Summer Academies are off to a successful start. During the first week of training, approximately 160 evaluators completed the rigorous training. According to the exit surveys, more than 90 percent of Summer Academy participants

reported that their presenters were effective or highly effective. Additionally, more than 90 percent of participants reported overall confidence in their ability to implement the major aspects of the Model.

To help ensure future participants have an equally positive training experience, it is critical that everyone register for one specific Academy (date and location) as soon as possible. The Summer Academies require a considerable amount of preparation and are not designed to accommodate “drop-in” participants. Registering for the trainings will help RIDE effectively manage logistics and will help ensure that participants receive the necessary pre-training communication.

While the Summer Academies are intended for designated evaluators in LEAs implementing the Rhode Island Model, non-designated evaluators (e.g., a university representative or an aspiring principal) are more than welcome to attend. Please note that only designated evaluators in LEAs implementing the Rhode Island Model will be provided with access to the Framework for Teaching Proficiency System (FFTPS) – the online, video-based classroom-observation training and assessment program. Non-designated evaluators will be introduced to the FFTPS but will not be provided with an account.

Educators can register for the Summer Academies through the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/TrainingReg.aspx>

14. RIDE seeks feedback on new early learning standards

Please see this notice from our Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge team:

As part of our Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, Rhode Island is developing birth-to-age-five early learning and development standards. These standards will replace the current Rhode Island early learning standards and are scheduled for completion by the end of the year. The new standards will represent the expectations for what children should know and be able to do at different ages of early childhood and are intended to guide early care and education practices, inform parents of key milestones in early childhood development and learning, and serve as the foundation for the Rhode Island system of early learning and development. We in Rhode Island will be working with national experts to ensure that the new early learning standards meet or exceed nationally recognized criteria for high-quality standards. Most important, we will seek input from the Rhode Island early childhood community to make certain that the standards meet the needs, and are consistent with the expectations of, the broad range of early childhood stakeholders in the state. This input is considered vital for the successful completion and implementation of the early learning standards.

Attached to this Field Memo is a document with information about our work to develop birth-to-age-five early learning and development standards as part of the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant (ELDS Input Feedback Invitation). This document

includes information about the development process and opportunities for you to provide input and feedback. We encourage you to pass this information along to others in the early childhood community. If you have any questions about the public forums, or to R.S.V.P. to any of the sessions, e-mail sara.a.mickelson@ride.ri.gov.

From the U.S. Department of Education:

15. Department releases data on college attainment

Please see this notice from the Office of Communications and Outreach. The data show that, as of 2010, 42 percent of our population ages 25 to 34 had attained college degrees – slightly better than the national average but 5th among the New England states:

This week, the Administration released new numbers showing college attainment state-by-state based on the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (three-year averaged estimates for 2007-09 and 2008-10). All told, the percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds with some kind of postsecondary degree increased half a percentage point, from 38.8% to 39.3%. The numbers include a calculation of each state's share to meet the President's goal for the United States to have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020. To be first in the world in the proportion of college graduates with an associate's degree or higher, the nation must increase the national college attainment rate by 50% from its current level by 2020. This would lift the nation as a whole to a 60% college attainment rate.

For more information, see:

<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/new-state-state-college-attainment-numbers-show-progress-toward-2020-goal>.

Other:

16. VFW announces scholarships, awards for students, teachers

Please see this notice from the Rhode Island Veterans of Foreign Wars:

Rhode Island students have an opportunity to participate for a chance to earn a scholarship through the Voice of Democracy (VOD) and Patriots Pen (Pat Pen) Scholarship Programs from the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). Rhode Island teachers are also eligible to apply for the VFW Teacher of the Year Award

Eligible schools or students complete the entry requirements of the programs and solicit sponsorship from their nearest VFW Post <http://vfwri.com/post-directory.html> or Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW. A Banquet will be held in January to announce the state winners of both the VOD and Pat Pen scholarship programs. Both winning entries at the State level then advance to the National level to compete other winning entries (the

Rhode Island VOD winner earns a trip to Washington to participate in the National contest).

Each Post or Auxiliary sponsoring schools or students that have winning entries submitted to the District level are encouraged to present a stipend to the students with winning entries at the Post level. Additionally, Districts are encouraged to provide a stipend to the students with winning entries at that level as well. Scholarship bonds are provided to the state winner at the banquet.

The *Voice of Democracy* Program is open to students in grades 9-12, who are enrolled in a public, private or parochial high school or home study program.

The deadline to enter the 2012-13 program is **November 1**. The theme for 2012-13 is: "Is Our Constitution Still Relevant?"

Students should record their reading of the draft to a CD. The recording can be no shorter than 3 minutes and no longer than 5 minutes (plus or minus 5 seconds). For more information, see:

<http://www.vfw.org/Community/Voice-of-Democracy/>

The *Patriots Pen* program is open to students in grades 6 - 8, who are enrolled in a public, private or parochial high school or home study program.

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he deadline for the 2012-13 program is **November 1**. The theme for 2012-13 is: "What I Would Tell America's Founding Fathers."

Essays must be no less than 300 words and cannot exceed 400 words and should be submitted to the Post. For more information, see:

<http://www.vfw.org/Community/Patriot-s-Pen/>

Each year three exceptional teachers are recognized by the Veterans of Foreign Wars for their outstanding commitment to teach Americanism and patriotism to their students.

The VFW's National Citizenship Education Teacher Awards (Teacher of the Year) include the following items:

- a \$1,000 award to the top K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grade teachers for professional-development expenses;
- \$1,000 award for each winning teacher's school;
- plaques for both the winning teacher and school; and
- an all-expenses-paid trip to attend a VFW conference and receive the award.

For more information, see:

<http://www.vfw.org/Community/Teacher-of-the-Year/>

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>